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4.15 The Connétable of St. John of the Chief Minister regarding immigration controls:

Given that currently anyone can obtain a job as a registered employee and after 5 years' residence become entitled and able to change jobs leaving the employer free to take another registered person, who may have just only arrived in the Island, could the Chief Minister explain how this controls immigration?

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

Could I ask my Assistant Minister with responsibility for population to act as rapporteur?

Senator P.F. Routier (Assistant Chief Minister - rapporteur):

Every 2 weeks the Housing and Work Advisory Group consider applications from employers to employ registered staff. It is very clear that these permissions are important and businesses feel the same way. New migrants do not have access to benefits and come to Jersey to work. We are limiting these permissions to work and we are considering whether we can make different rules to remove permissions from business licences when people qualify after 5 years. Currently, when reviewing licences, we have been withdrawing unused registered licences. However, we have to support economic growth and not over-burden businesses. This is a difficult balancing act.

4.15.1 The Connétable of St. John:

The Minister said they do not have access to benefits. However, after 5 years they do have access to benefits. What studies and impacts have been made to find out what cost this is to the Island?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I am not sure whether that is a question to the Minister for Social Security but certainly it was recognised when the income support legislation was brought in that someone who had been in the Island for 5 years, it should be a right that they should be able to receive benefits and they have to wait to 10 years for benefits. I recognise the issue which has been raised but I think it is only natural that we should be supporting people who have been here for 5 years.

4.15.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Assistant Minister recognise that cohabiting couples who have been together for some years but less than 5 years living in the Island are effectively discriminated against compared to those who are in a married relationship where one partner is from the outside, and what is the current situation when it comes to viewing their applications favourably for a licence?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Is the Deputy referring to people with licensed applications as opposed to registered?

Deputy M. Tadier:

That is right. So somebody who would previously have been unqualified for the 5-year period, being unable to work whereas if they were recently married and just come to the Island they would be able to work straightaway.

Senator P.F. Routier:

There is certainly an issue with regard to people who have a licence post, their partner being able to work, but when it comes to registered that is not the case. If the Deputy would like to forward me

any particular details of particular people I can certainly look at that if there is any dissatisfaction, but certainly we do hear appeals on a regular basis for particular people but it is an issue. I know that it is with regard to registered people.

4.15.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

I think the underlying point is that if the current regulations are supposed to act as a population policy it is not succeeding because there are individuals who are already living in the Island, may have been here for 3 or 4 years, who are here and they will either be here working and contributing or they will be here not working and not contributing and so targeting those people does not help the population situation. It just means that there are individuals living on one wage rather than 2 and perhaps increasing relative poverty in our Island. Is that something which the Assistant Minister could comment on?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Certainly in my opening comments I mentioned what is ... I think the most recent survey is 92 per cent of people who have come to the Island who are in the registered category are in work. There is a small amount of people that are not in work and obviously are not benefiting our community. I think there are some people who come to our Island, as you describe, who are sharing accommodation but the Government are not supporting them and they are not taking up any housing because they are sharing accommodation.

4.15.4 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I think the Assistant Minister for Population again misses the whole point. The last 5 words: "explain how this controls immigration" and it is like Deputy Tadier has just mentioned, for years we have tried restricting work, restricting housing practices and it is not controlling immigration. Will the Assistant Minister just admit this? He has not got the correct tools to say this is controlling or a control of immigration in the Island and if it is it is failing miserably.

Senator P.F. Routier:

I think the Deputy is aware and Members are aware that people who are from within the U.K. and from Europe, wider, have the ability to come to our Island, and our system of controlling access to work and to housing is our mechanism for controlling the number of people in the Island. It is the tool we have adopted. We do not have border controls. We have had this discussion many a time. We have the tool and some people do not think it is effective enough but it is effective because of the amount of appeals that we hear, the amount of refusals we have given. We have taken away 3,000 permissions in the last couple of years from registered businesses. It is the mechanism that we have and that is what we have to work with and Members have supported that in the past.

4.15.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister accept the figures produced by the Statistics Department which suggests that when we went from a 10-year qualification period to a 5-year qualification period large numbers of registered workers stayed on the 5 years but did not stay on, would not stay on, for 10 years causing an increase in the population rise which was noted in the inter consensus years? Does he accept that that argument still applies, that 5 years we do retain a lot more registered workers who then become entitled?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I think the Deputy's explanation of what happened ... we have not changed anything. It was always 5 years for work and 10 years for housing but when the legislation was being considered it was

considered that it all should be 10 years but it was thought by many people that was an inappropriate thing to do because it was going to restrict people coming to the Island completely, because we do need to have some people come into the Island, because they would not be able to access benefits if they did fall on hard times.

[11:15]

There is an issue. Certainly with regard to the difference between 5 and 10 years but we are managing it. It is a very difficult topic to deal with and we deal with it assisted by the Minister for Housing, the Minister for Social Security and the Minister for Economic Development and we need to look at these things in the round. We do need people to come to our Island to do certain tasks and we have an inflow and outflow every year of people coming and going to this Island.

4.15.6 The Connétable of St. John:

People who come in as registered employees, how many of them bring a family and are thereby using resources from education and other facilities and have you done any impact studies and are they available?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I have not got that detail with me but that would be something I would need to ask the Statistics Unit. There is a rough guideline of, is it, for every job permission we recognise that it is 2.1 as an average of people that come to the Island?

The Connétable of St. John:

I asked what the cost was and could we find out what the cost is to the Island of those additional people?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I would imagine that would be extremely difficult. It would depend on the jobs that the people were doing. If they were able to support themselves, which in many cases is what is happening to people because they have no access to benefits, that the only area which would be would be access to education and no doubt some sort of calculation could be made with regard to the cost of that, and also access to health, but they would have the same conditions as our ordinary population after they had been here for 6 months for health. Certainly I can ask the department to work on some figures for you.